

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A hot-rolled-strip production method wherein a hot rolled strip obtained by rolling with a hot rolling mill is conveyed by a hot runout table, and is coiled with a coiler, the production method comprising ~~the steps of:~~

squirting a fluid jet above the hot rolled strip conveyed by the hot runout table so as to pass over the hot rolled strip without touching a surface of any portion of the hot rolled strip when the hot rolled strip is running entirely on a pass line; ~~(strip-conveying surface of the hot runout table); and~~

wherein when causing a portion of the strip is displaced upward from the pass line beyond a predetermined level, the displaced portion of the strip collides ~~to collide~~ with the fluid jet in order to correct ~~the~~ displacement of the displaced portion.

2. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to claim 1, wherein ~~the~~ a height of a center line of the fluid jet, passing over the hot rolled strip, from the pass line is within ~~the~~ a range of 50 mm to 450 mm.

3. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to claim 1, wherein ~~the~~ a height of a center

line of the fluid jet, passing over the hot rolled strip, from the pass line is more than or equal to 50 mm and less than 200 mm.

4. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein ~~the~~ a line-direction thrust  $F_L$  of the fluid jet passing above the hot rolled strip is defined by ~~the following~~ equation (1), and is set to be within ~~the~~ a range of 10 kgf to 50 kgf:

$$F_L = [\rho A(v \cos(\pi \times \alpha / 180) - u)^2] / 9.8 \quad (1)$$

wherein

- $\rho$ : ~~the~~ a density of fluid that forms the fluid jet ( $\text{kg/m}^3$ )
- $A$ : ~~the~~ a cross-sectional area of an aperture of a fluid-squirting nozzle ( $\text{m}^2$ )
- $v$ : ~~the~~ a velocity of the fluid jet ( $\text{m/sec}$ )
- $u$ : ~~the~~ a running velocity of the hot rolled strip ( $\text{m/sec}$ )
- $\alpha$ : ~~the~~ an angle of ~~the~~ a squirting direction of the fluid jet with respect to a strip running direction ( $^\circ$ ).

5. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the fluid jet is squirted at an angle  $\alpha$  to a strip running direction, and the angle  $\alpha$  satisfies ~~the condition~~  $0^\circ \leq \alpha < 90^\circ$ .

6. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to claim 5, wherein a velocity component in ~~the~~ a longitudinal direction of the pass line of the fluid jet passing above the hot rolled strip is higher than a running velocity of the hot rolled strip.

7. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to claim 5, wherein a velocity component in ~~the~~ a longitudinal direction of the pass line of the fluid jet passing above a head end of the hot rolled strip is higher than a running velocity of the hot rolled strip, and a velocity component in the longitudinal direction of the pass line of the fluid jet passing above a tail end of the hot rolled strip is lower than the running velocity of the hot rolled strip.

8. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the fluid jet is squirted at an angle  $\alpha$  to a counter strip running direction, and the angle  $\alpha$  satisfies ~~the condition~~  $0^\circ \leq \alpha < 90^\circ$ .

9. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the fluid jet is squirted at a head end of the hot rolled strip at an angle  $\alpha$  to a strip running direction, and the angle  $\alpha$  satisfies ~~the~~

~~condition~~  $0^\circ \leq \alpha < 90^\circ$ , and wherein the fluid jet is squirted at a tail end of the hot rolled strip at an angle  $\alpha$  to a counter running direction, and the angle  $\alpha$  satisfies ~~the condition~~  $0^\circ \leq \alpha < 90^\circ$ .

10. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein squirting of the fluid jet is performed at a plurality of positions appropriately spaced in ~~the~~ a longitudinal direction of the hot runout table.

11. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to claim 10, wherein ~~the~~ an interval between the fluid-jet squirting positions in the longitudinal direction of the hot runout table is within ~~the~~ a range of 5 m to 15 m.

12. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the fluid jet is allowed to completely pass over the hot rolled strip in ~~the~~ a widthwise direction by setting an angle  $\alpha$  of ~~the~~ a squirting direction of the fluid jet with respect to a strip running direction or a counter running direction so as to satisfy ~~the condition~~  $0^\circ \leq \alpha < 90^\circ$ .

13. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to claim 12, wherein squirting of the fluid jet is performed at a plurality of positions appropriately spaced in ~~the~~ a longitudinal direction of the hot runout table, and wherein imaginary jet pass lines x are obtained by projecting, onto the surface of the hot rolled strip, ~~the~~ paths of fluid jets that completely pass over the hot rolled strip in the widthwise direction, and ends of jet pass lines x and x adjacent in ~~the~~ a longitudinal direction of the pass line, of the imaginary jet pass lines x, correspond or overlap with each other in the longitudinal direction of the pass line.

14. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein squirting of the fluid jet is performed on both widthwise sides of the hot runout table, and fluid jets that are squirted at positions opposing across the hot runout table, including ~~including~~ positions that are asymmetrically provided with respect to the hot runout table, and ~~and~~ that pass over the hot rolled strip are substantially equal in a widthwise thrust  $F_w$  defined by ~~the~~ the following equation (2):

$$F_w = [\rho A (v \sin(\pi \times \alpha / 180))^2] / 9.8 \quad (2)$$

wherein

$\rho$ : ~~the~~ a density of fluid that forms the fluid jet ( $\text{kg/m}^3$ )

- A: ~~the~~ a cross-sectional area of an aperture of a fluid-squirting nozzle ( $\text{m}^2$ )
- v: ~~the~~ a velocity of the fluid jet (m/sec)
- $\alpha$ : ~~the~~ an angle of ~~the~~ a squirting direction of the fluid jets with respect to the longitudinal direction of the pass line ~~(a strip running direction or a counter running direction)~~ ( $^\circ$ ).

15. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the fluid jet passes above the hot rolled strip in ~~the~~ a longitudinal direction of the pass line, and is collected above the hot rolled strip on ~~the~~ a downstream side in ~~the~~ a squirting direction of the fluid jet.

16. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein ~~the~~ a squirting direction of the fluid jet is inclined upward or downward with respect to a horizontal plane, and ~~the~~ an inclination angle  $\beta$  of the squirting direction of the fluid jet with respect to the horizontal plane is  $10^\circ$  or less.

17. (Previously Presented) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the hot

rolled strip conveyed by the hot runout table is cooled by cooling water supplied from above, and a shield for shielding the fluid jet from the cooling water is provided above the fluid jet.

18. (Original) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to claim 17, wherein the shield is a shielding member provided above the fluid jet.

19. (Original) The hot-rolled-strip production method according to claim 17, wherein the shield is a shielding fluid jet that flows substantially parallel to and above the fluid jet.

20. (Currently Amended) A hot-rolled-strip production system comprising:

a hot rolling train;

a hot runout table provided on an exit side of the hot rolling train to convey a hot rolled strip; ~~and~~

a coiler for coiling the hot rolled strip conveyed by the hot runout table; and [[,]]

~~wherein~~ a fluid-squirting nozzle ~~is provided by the side of~~ adjacent to or above the hot runout table to squirt a fluid jet above the hot rolled strip conveyed by the hot runout table so that the fluid jet passes over the hot rolled strip without touching a surface of any portion of the hot rolled strip when

the hot rolled strip is running entirely on a pass line ~~(a strip-conveying surface of the hot runout table), and the~~

wherein a height of ~~the~~ a center of a nozzle aperture of the fluid-squirting nozzle from the pass line is within ~~the~~ a range of 50 mm to 450 mm.

21. (Original) The hot-rolled-strip production system according to claim 20, wherein the height of the center of the nozzle aperture of the fluid-squirting nozzle from the pass line is more than or equal to 50 mm and less than 200 mm.

22. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production system according to claim 20 or 21, wherein ~~the~~ an angle  $\alpha$  of a squirting direction of the fluid jet from the fluid-squirting nozzle with respect to a strip running direction satisfies ~~the condition~~  $0^\circ \leq \alpha < 90^\circ$ .

23. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production system according to claim 20 or 21, wherein ~~the~~ an angle  $\alpha$  of a squirting direction of the fluid jet from the fluid-squirting nozzle with respect to a counter running direction satisfies ~~the condition~~  $0^\circ \leq \alpha < 90^\circ$ .

24. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production system according to claim 20 or 21, wherein the fluid-squirting

nozzle includes a first fluid-squirting nozzle member that allows ~~the~~ an angle  $\alpha$  of a squirting direction of the fluid jet with respect to a strip running direction to satisfy ~~the condition~~  $0^\circ \leq \alpha < 90^\circ$ , and a second fluid-squirting nozzle member that allows ~~the~~ an angle  $\alpha$  of a squirting direction of the fluid jet with respect to a counter running direction to satisfy ~~the condition~~  $0^\circ \leq \alpha < 90^\circ$ .

25. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production system according to claim 20 or 21, wherein the fluid-squirting nozzle includes a plurality of fluid-squirting ~~nozzles~~ nozzle members appropriately spaced in ~~the~~ a longitudinal direction of the hot runout table.

26. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production system according to claim 25, wherein ~~the~~ an interval between the fluid-squirting ~~nozzles~~ nozzle members in the longitudinal direction of the hot runout table is within ~~the~~ a range of 5 m to 15 m.

27. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production system according to claim 20 or 21, wherein ~~the~~ an angle  $\alpha$  of a squirting direction of the fluid jet from the fluid-squirting nozzle with respect to a strip running direction or a counter

running direction satisfies ~~the condition~~  $0^\circ \leq \alpha < 90^\circ$ , and the fluid jet squirted from the fluid-squirting nozzle completely passes over the hot rolled strip in ~~the~~ a widthwise direction.

28. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production system according to claim 27, wherein the fluid-squirting nozzle includes a plurality of fluid-squirting ~~nozzles~~ nozzle members appropriately spaced in ~~the~~ a longitudinal direction of the hot runout table, imaginary jet pass lines x are obtained by projecting, onto the surface of the hot rolled strip, ~~the~~ paths of fluid jets that completely pass over the hot rolled strip in the widthwise direction, and ~~the~~ an interval and ~~the~~ squirting direction of the fluid-squirting ~~nozzles~~ nozzle members are determined so that ends of jet pass lines x and x adjacent in ~~the~~ a longitudinal direction of the pass line, of the imaginary jet pass lines x, correspond or overlap with each other in the ~~pass-line~~ longitudinal direction of the pass line.

29. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production system according to claim 20 or 21, wherein the fluid-squirting nozzle is provided above the pass line so that the squirted fluid jet passes above the hot rolled strip in ~~the~~ a longitudinal direction of the pass line, and collecting means for collecting the fluid jet is provided above the pass line on ~~the~~ a downstream side in ~~the~~ a squirting direction of the fluid jet.

30. (Currently Amended) The hot-rolled-strip production system according to claim 20 or 21, wherein a squirting direction of the fluid jet from the fluid-squirting nozzle is inclined upward or downward with respect to a horizontal plane, and ~~the~~ an inclination angle  $\beta$  of the squirting direction with respect to the horizontal plane is  $10^\circ$  or less.

31. (Previously Presented) The hot-rolled-strip production system according to claim 20 or 21, further comprising:

a cooling device for supplying cooling water from above to the hot rolled strip conveyed by the hot runout table; and

a shielding member provided above the hot runout table to shield the fluid jet squirted from the fluid-squirting nozzle from the cooling water.

32. (Previously Presented) The hot-rolled-strip production system according to claim 20 or 21, further comprising:

a cooling device for supplying cooling water from above to the hot rolled strip conveyed by the hot runout table; and

a shielding-fluid-jet squirting nozzle that squirts, above and substantially parallel to the fluid jet squirted from the fluid-squirting nozzle, a shielding fluid jet for shielding the fluid jet from the cooling water.